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BUREAU OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

March 1989

GERIATRIC ACTIVITIES

A 1987 report to the Congress, *Personnel for Health Needs of the Elderly Through Year 2020*, documents the need for many more adequately trained personnel to provide health services to older persons. Most primary care physicians and many other health and allied health professionals will be serving a substantial number of older persons in the future. Greater educational emphasis is needed on prevention and management of diseases and disabilities experienced by older persons. The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Bureau of Health Professions (BHPr) has, for several years, provided a Federal focus for education and training of health professionals in this area.

GERIATRIC EDUCATION CENTERS

The Bureau funds a network of 33 Geriatric Education Centers (GEC) across the Nation. Each center offers education and training opportunities for health professionals and other personnel to enhance the availability and quality of health care for older adults. The centers provide multidisciplinary geriatric training for health professions faculty and students and continuing education for professionals in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, occupational and physical therapy, podiatry, optometry and related allied, public and community health disciplines. The centers also provide technical assistance in the development of geriatric education programs and serve as resources for educational materials and consultation. In FY 1988 these centers were funded at a level of $9.5 million. An evaluation of the GECs was completed in early February 1989.

NURSING EDUCATION

Four separate nursing grant programs support geriatric/gerontological education: (1) Advanced Nurse Education (2) Nurse Practitioner and Nurse Midwifery (3) Special Projects, and (4) Professional Nurse Traineeships. More than 80 grant awards made in FY 1988 through these 4 programs included education related to care of older persons. Many nurse practitioner projects also present content relating to home care and the care of aged persons in nursing homes, as well as in ambulatory care settings.

GERIATRIC FELLOWSHIPS

During FY 1988, the first awards for faculty training projects in geriatric medicine and dentistry were made under a newly authorized grant program.

Twenty-three institutions in 20 states received $2.8 million. The projects will provide 1 to 2 year training programs in clinical geriatrics, teaching, administration and research skills for 44 physicians and 26 dentists.

GERIATRICS & PRIMARY CARE

During FY 1989, the Bureau will encourage applicants for primary care training grants to incorporate geriatric education in their programs. In funding approved applications in the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program, graduate training in family medicine, faculty development in family medicine and residency training and advanced education in the general practice of dentistry, priority will be given to proposals that include geriatric educational components.

Additional curriculum development is being carried out through contract efforts. Boston University is developing a geriatric/gerontological curriculum module for preventive medicine residency training programs, to be completed by summer 1990. A short-term continuing education program for registered nurses to learn how to perform discharge planning for elderly patients is also being carried out under contract with Education Development Center, Inc. of Newton, Massachusetts.

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STUDIES & CONFERENCES

The Bureau is undertaking two special studies in response to a Congressional mandate. The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 requires reports by July 1, 1990, on: (1) the advisability of continuing or terminating the exception for geriatric residencies and fellowships from the limitation on Medicare reimbursement for clinical training; (2) the advisability of expanding the exception to cover other educational activities, particularly those which are necessary to meet the projected health care needs of Medicare beneficiaries; and (3) the adequacy of the supply of faculty in the field of geriatrics. The Bureau has funded two contracts to provide relevant data and analysis to help address these issues. Boston University has been working on the first two issues since early summer 1988. In December 1988 the University of California at Los Angeles began work on the third issue.

Together with several other Public Health Service agencies and the Department of Education, the Bureau sponsored a December 1988 conference on Rehabilitation and Geriatric Education. The conference provided a multidisciplinary forum for educators and practitioners to discuss commonalities and differences among and between the fields of rehabilitation and geriatric care and the implications for training. The conference proceedings should be available by late spring 1989.

INFORMATION

For further information on Bureau geriatric activities, contact the BHPr Geriatrics Coordinator at (301)443-6853, or at the following address:

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